

A  
POSTSCRIPT

T O

ENTHUSIASM in Distress.

OCCASION'D

By a Pamphlet, Intitled, *Comprehension more properly than Ethusiasm in Distress*: Said to be written by one Mr. Peter Nisbet, in Defence of *Phileleutherus Britannicus*.

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By THOMAS MORGAN.

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L O N D O N:

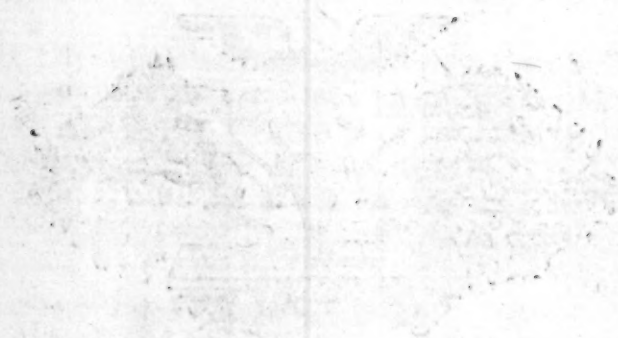
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POSTSCRIPT

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A  
**POSTSCRIPT**  
 TO  
**ENTHUSIASM in Distress.**



**U**PON my publishing the Letter to *Phileleutherus Britannicus*, occasion'd by his *Reflections upon Reason*, the learned Gentleman who had taken that Name, endeavour'd at first to perswade People, that what I had offer'd against him was of no Consequence; that as such it ought to be slighted; and that he, for his own part, had other Fish to fry, and did not intend to trouble his Head at all about it. But when he found the popular Torrent bear too strong upon him, and that People of all Perswasions generally ran into the Opinion, that he had some other Reason for not defending himself than what he assign'd; and that the true Reason was not proper to be given; this seem'd to provoke him into a Resolution of undeceiving the World in a Matter which so nearly concern'd his Character, as an able learned Man. And now his most intimate Friends freely opened themselves in Conversation upon it, declaring that the Au-

thor of the *Reflections*, &c. had determin'd upon a *Reply*; that a *stinging one* was gone to the Press; that he would clearly evince how much I had been mistaken in my Adversary, and make a publick Example of me for the Weakness and Presumption of attacking him.

But it soon appear'd that the learned Author had taken Wit again in his Anger: For having been convinced by some of the ablest of his Friends in *London*, whom he had consulted about it, that both his own *Reputation*, and the *Interest of Truth*, requir'd his Silence, he resumes his Resolution as strong as ever to keep himself on the safest Side, and to make sure of saying nothing amiss, by saying nothing at all. Here then is our learned Author's *Prudence*; and no doubt but he is infallibly in the right, that the *Truth* is best secur'd by resolving not to defend it.

I shall not enter upon the Detail of this Gentleman's private Management. I envy him not the Honour he gains by shuffling up and down among trusty Friends a still-born Production of his own, fill'd with bitter Revilings, and the most gross Misrepresentations, which he dares not expose to publick View. Nor shall I presume to say how many Letters he has receiv'd from Gentlemen of the most establish'd Reputation for Learning, and Piety, with Thanks and Complements for his Performance; or how secure he is in the good Opinion of himself upon their *Authority* and his own. These, and such like Shifts, to save the Credit of a *dying Author*, may afford Matter of Speculation and Discourse at *Marlborough*; but it does not at all concern the rest of the World, who ought not therefore to be troubled with it.

No sooner had the *Author* of the *Reflections* resolved to give up the *Ghost*, but out comes a printed Letter, directed to me, as from one Mr. *Peter Nisbet* of *Bristol*. Whether there be any such Person in being or no, I cannot tell, nor am I at all concerned to enquire; my Business is only to consider what the Author of the Letter has said to the Purpose, and whether he has indeed saved the Honour of his deceased Friend by an handsome Funeral. A decent Interment is supposed to be the least Respect a Man can pay to a dead Friend. But in my Opinion, Mr. *Nisbet* has been merry quite out of Time



Time and Place. Such Airs are not so proper for a House of Mourning; and instead of being so gay, it would perhaps have been more suitable to the Occasion, if he had seriously bethought himself that his own Turn might come next. Mr. Nisbet ought to have been very serious at such a Solemnity, and not have turned his Friends Obsequies into a Theatrical Piece of Mockery. But let us see how he behaves upon this Occasion.

And here the first thing he introduces is a certain Engine, contrived by the late Author to preserve the World from the Flames, and prevent a general Conflagration. With this Engine, as he pretends, his Friend might have done great Service, if I could but have let him gone on with it, and had not disturbed him, and his good Work then, while they were playing it. But what does Mr. Nisbet mean by this? does he think we are come to a Funeral to be entertain'd after this idle ridiculous manner? has it not been prov'd that these Flames are only imaginary? and besides, that the Engine was a mere Whim, so slightly put together that it would not hold Water; and therefore could have been of no use, supposing the Danger to have been real? You know very well that your Friend, though a good Man, was now and then a little whimsical; he would laugh and cry in the same Breath: This Minute he would be extreamly merry, and presently throw himself into a great Rage upon a Matter of no Moment: Sometimes he would make his Bows and Complements to the good old Gentleman Reason, and tell him that he was a great Prince, and ought to govern the World; and soon after he would fall into strange Fits at the bare Sight or Name of Reason, and cry out, the Spirit! the Spirit! O that carnal Devil Reason!

From these odd Symptoms People began to suspect, that if he had liv'd longer he must have run quite beside himself. This is no Secret; 'tis well known to the whole Neighbourhood, and to every one of us who now upon your Invitation attend his Funeral. And therefore pray, Mr. Nisbet, call another Cause, and talk no more of the Engine.

Mr. Nisbet, in the next Place, falls into an odd Train of Disorders, partly *hypocondriacal*, and partly *malignant*,  
upon

upon the Sound of that startling dreadful Word **COMPREHENSION**. This Stimulus has contracted all his Nerves; and the Spasm seizing him while he was laughing, 'tis wonderful to observe what a Figure he makes; for though he still endeavours to laugh, and strives to put on a merry Countenance, yet every one must see, that 'tis mere Affectation and Grimace, since he discovers the evident Symptoms of a Plague in the Bowels, and is plainly tormented with all the Gripes of *Interest* and *worldly Power*. Perhaps the easing of his Mind upon this Head, might be one chief Cause of his inviting me to this Entertainment; and since I have been the Occasion of throwing the Gentleman into this Disorder, it concerns me to give him all reasonable Satisfaction.

I had maintain'd against his Friend, that nothing ought to be insisted on as necessary to Christian Peace, Unity, and Church Communion, but what the Scripture itself has made necessary to these Ends: And that to exclude Men from the Communion of the Church, and the Benefits of the Christian Covenant, on the Account of any thing for which Christ himself has not, or will not in the last Day exclude them from the Kingdom of Heaven; that this, I say, is a bold presumptuous Usurpation of Christ's Authority, an exercising a spiritual Tyranny over the Consciences of Men, and the Ground of all the Enmities, Church-Divisions, and Party-Rage, in the Christian World. Here Mr. Nisbet has been so far from confuting any thing I had said upon this Principle, that he has not so much as mention'd it. *Church Communion*, upon *Scripture Terms*, is the very thing that he fears; he cannot bear the Thought; this is the Thing at which his Soul trembles. But let us only suppose the thing as possible; let us suppose that a *Comprehension* should some time or other take Place, and Christians come to be better united, than they hitherto have been, upon a Scripture Foot, what then? What then! Why then the Lord have Mercy upon us! for this must make Oaths, Canons, Articles, and Rubricks, as much old Almanacks as the Covenant; that hence forward, as the Churches fall void, a Quaker may get one, an Arian another, and so on, with the like Privilege to every new Set. a fruitful Age  
may

may produce; a *Design*, it seems, which never had its *Parallel* since the Times of Julian the Apostate, p. 8.

If I thought him capable of giving a sober Answer under such a Fright, I should here ask him, whether his *Canons*, *Articles*, and *Rubricks*, are necessary Rules of a Christian Faith and Practice; or whether the holy Scripture without *these* is not the only Rule, and a sufficient Rule of Christian Faith and Practice? To say that the Scripture is the only Rule, and a sufficient Rule; and yet that there are other Rules, without which the Scripture cannot be sufficient, is affronting the Understandings of Men, and a most ridiculous Banter upon Common Sense. And should a Man say this, and yet at the same time pretend a mighty Zeal against *Popery*, *Jesuitism*, and *Emissaries from Rome*, it must be such a Complication of *Absurdity*, and *Impudence*, as cannot be parallell'd even in *Julian* himself. Mr. Nisbet is mightily concern'd to guard the Church against Error and Heresy, and hence it is that he seems so fond of *Oaths*; whereas he ought to consider, that all the *Oaths* and Subscriptions in the World can serve only to keep out honest consciencious Men, but cannot possibly keep out those who will profess, subscribe, and swear any thing, for their own Interest; and, if I am not much mistaken, *these* are the worst and most dangerous *Hereticks* of all. *Oaths* can be no more a Test against *Heresy* than against *Jacobitism*; and of how little Consequence they are in this last Case, every Body knows. I cannot imagine therefore, why he has here rack'd *Oaths* to *Canons*, *Articles*, &c. unless he thinks that his humane infallible Standards of Christian Faith and Practice ought to be continu'd, if it was only for the mere sake of *swearing*. I beg his Pardon for this Freedom; I hope it will not ruffle his Conscience, or put him out of his good Humour.

But the greatest Jest of all is, Mr. Nisbet's seeming Concern for the good People, and the miserable Shifts to which he supposes they must be reduc'd, if the Institutions of *Christ* should ever take place instead of the Institutions of *Men*. Upon this Occasion he turns the People out of their Churches, and directs them to the Meeting-Houses, and sends a poor honest Man up and down on a sleeveless Errand, from one Parish to another,

to



to get his Child baptiz'd, and brings him home at last disappointed, as finding a Quaker in one Church, an Anabaptist in another, &c. and all this he pretends as the necessary Consequence of exchanging humane *Creeds* and *Canons* for the *Bible*. 'Tis evident that he is here maintaining the secular exclusive *Interests* of his own *Clergy*, while he pretends to be concerned for the religious *Rights* and *Liberties* of the *Christian People*. No doubt but the *Clergy*, so far as they are *Civil Officers*, and expect their Pay from the *Crown*, must conform themselves, in Matters of *Religion*, to the *Civil Law*. I have never disputed this, nor pretended to direct the Magistrate about the making or repealing of any Civil Laws in Matters of Religion; and therefore, if this Gentleman has mistaken me here, the Blame must lie at his Door, and not at mine. But then this has no manner of Relation at all to the Constitution of Christian Churches, or the Terms of Christian Unity and Communion, as laid down in Scripture, and settled by Christ and the Apostles. These Matters depend intirely upon divine Institutions and Sanctions, which no humane Authority, or Civil Power in the World, can any ways supercede or alter. Let us suppose, then, the Person legally presented and inducted to a particular Parish, and who hereupon takes Possession of the Church, and has a legal Right to the Tithes; let us suppose him, I say, not to be a Quaker, an Anabaptist, or an Arian, but in truth and reality a Man of no Religion at all, who gives sufficient Proofs that he neither fears God nor regards Man, and who is to all Intents and Purposes an *Atheist*: Now I would ask here, does this legal Presentation and Induction give the Man any spiritual Jurisdiction in the Parish, or oblige the People to intrust him with the Care of their Souls? To say this, would be as contrary to the Law of Nature, and to the Law of Christ, as it is to the Law of *England*; and therefore the People in this Case being at full Liberty, by all the Right and Law in the World, must be indispensibly bound to make the best Provision they can for their own Souls, by chusing a fit Person for that Purpose, just after the same manner as if there had been no such thing as an Impropriation of Tithes to any particular Use at all.



all. And here the Person aforesaid could not think himself aggrieved in being discharged from the Care and Trouble of *feeding the Flock*, since he would still have the Right and Liberty of *fleeing them*. The former he is supposed either to have no Capacity for, or no Inclination to; and therefore the latter, which is, what he aims at, must needs content him.

Thus is all Mr. Nisbet's Concern for the good People founded upon the secular Interest of the Hierarchy, and upon this Supposition, that a *Christian Man* has not as much Right to take care of his *Soul* as he has of his *Horse*, while he can chuse his *Currier*, but not his *Pastor*.

If this Gentleman has frighted himself with any such sort of Comprehension as was never aim'd at, or contend'd for by me, I cannot help it. 'Tis well known that what I have argued for against his Friend, and all along in other Writings, is this, That the holy Scripture alone is the only Rule of Christian Faith and Practice, the only Test of religious Orthodoxy, and the only Centre of Christian Unity; that to set up any mere human Tests and Standards of religious Faith and Practice, is in Effect to lay aside the Scriptures for the sake of a more *intelligible, clear, and certain* Rule; that this has been the great Engine of carnal Interest, Church-Tyranny, Persecution, and Party-Rage in all Ages; that these Tests and human Decisions have always been more dark and doubtful than the Scripture it self, which they pretend to limit and explain; and that this must necessarily eternize our Divisions, and propagate the Flames and Animosities of the Christian Church and World *in infinitum*.

Now to pretend, as Mr. Nisbet does in his Letter, that this Principle and way of Talking are Jesuitical; and that if People are once driven from their human Creeds and Tests of Orthodoxy, they can have no other Refuge but to betake themselves to *Rome* for a Decision: This, I say, is so vain and groundless a Pretence, so much unlike a Gentleman, a Scholar, or a Christian, and visibly contains in it so mean a Piece of ill Nature, that I do not envy him the Favour and good Opinion of those who can be weak and unthinking enough to be influenced by it. If the Scripture be not sufficiently *clear, definitive, and express*; in every thing necessary to *Salvation and Christian Communion*, to what End is it pretended as a *sufficient Rule of Christian Faith and Practice*? And if

other Rules are necessary, why is this declared to be the only Rule? Let Mr. Nisbet and his Friends tell us plainly, whether they are Protestants or not, and this Controversy will be at an End. If he does not believe the Scripture to be a sufficient Rule, and the only Rule of a Christian's Faith and Practice, as I have consider'd and explain'd it; let him show me how he can defend himself against the Papists upon any other Principle, and I will admire his Skill, submit to his Authority, and become his Disciple: But if he cannot do this, I hope he will not for the future argue against any thing that is necessary to make us rationally consistent with our selves.

Upon my saying, that the Church, as a tender Mother, ought to take a prudent Care of all her Children, and not nourish the strong and healthy only, and cast the weak and sickly away, or leave them to perish, because they cannot feed as the strong and healthy do; Mr. Nisbet thus merrily replies: "No, God forbid! Sir; only, if you please, instead of Mother, for once we'll take Father, whose Olive Branches running much on the Female Kind, he observes some of the younger Fry look pale, and off their Stomachs; and, upon Enquiry, finds they eat Salt, and any Trash they can come at, nor do the Sluts deny it; but clinging about, cry, Indeed, Papa, we do eat as you say, but we love it, and it goes down good; when Meat makes us sick, 'till we puke again. Now, pray, what shall this Man do? Shall he let 'em eat on 'till it kills or cripples 'em, as one or t'other it rarely fails of? Or restrain 'em what he can, 'till a Physician, with proper Remedies, has so recover'd their former Appetites, that they eat, and look like the rest? Your Opinion, Sir, as a Man of Sense and Sincerity, and (as I am told) a little Piece of a Physician too, which of these two Childish Allusions think you most *a propos*? p. 14, 15." Mr. Nisbet's Wit here is very pretty; and I have given this as a Specimen of his innocent Mirth, to let the Reader see with what perfect Ease, and entire Satisfaction, he can make himself ridiculous. I will not dispute with him, whether the Church be a Mother or a Father: The former has been generally allow'd; but since he will now have it otherwise, let it be Father Church for the present: And then it is plain, that in this Comparison, as he has put it,

it, all Dissenters are represented as this *Father Church's* young green-sick Girls; who, being in their Non-age, and wanting a Judgment of Discretion, when they would eat any thing hurtful, must be restrain'd by *Paternal*, i.e. *Church Authority*.

When *Authority* has once turned a Man's *Head*, and his *Imagination* has been well heated with the Pleasure and Advantages of *Dominion*, it is wonderful to observe how he will distort and pervert every thing that comes in his way; and be continually discovering the Cause of his *Disorder*, even while he is endeavouring to conceal it. The Question here was about *Things indifferent*, which by human Injunctions are made *necessary*, and inseparably tack'd to the Institutions of Christ; but he carries the Case quite out of the way, and applies it to Things in themselves *hurtful* or *sinful*, and supposes the Persons concerned, to take that which, if not prevented by due Restraints and proper Remedies, must certainly prove *mortal*, that is, as his Comparison must conclude, *damnable*; whereas he cannot but know that this is not the Question, my Argument had no Relation to it, nor is there any such Thing in Dispute.

Again, the Persons referr'd to, as capable of Church Communion, were such as must be allow'd a Judgment of Discretion to act and determine for themselves; but this Author turns it off to Children in a literal Sense, who must be kept under the Awe and Influence of *Paternal Authority*, 'till they come to Years of Discretion, and are capable of a rational *Self-Conduct*. And thus where he could say nothing to the Purpose, he thought it much like a Gentleman and a Scholar, to be very gay, and very impertinent. To my asking, Why any Thing that is not necessary, should be inseparably tack'd to a divine Institution; as for Instance, why People must be deny'd Baptism for their Children, if they cannot be satisfy'd of the Lawfulness of that human significant Sign of the Cross? Mr. *Nis'et* has nothing to say, but by pretending a particular Exception to the general Rule, in the Case of private Baptism, where the Time and Circumstances are supposed not to admit of it; but as it happens, I have said nothing to exclude this Exception, supposing it was an Exception to the general Rule.



I did not assert that the Cross is inseparably and *universally*, without Exception, tack'd to a divine Institution; but still I suppose it is *inseparably* tack'd to a *divine Institution* in all those Cases where Baptism cannot be had without it; and this I am sure is in all ordinary Cases. Besides, 'tis plain, that in the extraordinary Case of private Baptism, this Signing is not dispensed with, but only for the Time, and upon the present Exigence, till there be a proper Opportunity for it. And upon this Principle, it might be said, that Baptism itself is dispensed with, or not made necessary in some Cases; since, methinks, no Body should say that 'tis necessary, where it cannot possibly be had.

I may now leave it with the Reader to consider, whether the Cross in Baptism be not, according to the Sense and Judgment of the Church, inseparably tack'd to a divine Institution; and whether there was any Thing of Absurdity or Falshood in what I had said concerning it.

But Mr. Nisbet tells me, p. 16, that this was a *much greater Blunder in me*, not to say downright Falshood, than it was in the Author of the *Reflections* to declare, that the Scripture *asserts* three in Person, and but one in Essence. Any candid Reader, he says, would have understood it, that by *Assertion*, he meant only *necessary Inference*. And any well-meaning, unwary Reader, who had confided in the Author, must, I suppose, have understood it, that this was a Scripture Doctrine *expressly*, and in *Terms*; and that those who doubt of it, must deny the most plain express Texts of Scripture. I cannot think, that the Author did not know the Difference between *Assertion* and *Inference*, or that this was a mere Slip, or Oversight in him.

But why must a candid Reader by the Word *Assertion* understand *Inference*? At this Rate, any Party-Zealot, of what Opinion or Perswasion soever, might easily make the Scripture *assert* whatever he pleases; for 'tis but to call his own *Assertion*, a Scripture *Assertion*, or a *necessary Inference* from plain Texts, and the Business is done.

This Gentleman's Insinuation, that the *true Church*, in all Ages, have been agreed upon this Point, in Sense, as well as Sound, is a most vain and groundless Pretence. If we may take the Sense of the Church from the Writings



things of the most learned *Athanasians*, who for several Ages past have engross'd to themselves the Reputation and Advantages of Orthodoxy, 'tis plain that they have never been agreed upon this Point, and that they are as much divided, and differ as widely, at this Day as ever. Some take the Word *God* as a personal proper Name, for the one unoriginate, independent, *first Cause*, and *Author* of all Things; and by the Word *Person*, they mean only a particular *Mode*, *Attribute*, or manner of *Subsistence* in the one divine *Substance*. Others understand the Word *God*, as signifying an abstract *Essence*, *Species*, or sort of Things; and by *three Persons*, they understand three real, substantial, and distinct *Individuals*, of the same *Nature* and *Kind*, i. e. three equally supreme, independent, *first Causes*, *Creators*, and *Governours* of the Universe; and this has been professedly declared and contended for by some *Orthodox Writers*.

But the more artful Managers being aware that both these must be *Heresy*, continually play at fast and loose between them both, and fly from one Extreme to the other, just as Necessity drives them, and as the Exigence of the Case requires; while no Man has ever yet fix'd or settled any possible, consistent, or intelligible Medium between *Sabellianism* and *Trisbeism* upon *Athanasian Principles*. Till those Gentlemen therefore have better acquitted themselves, and clear'd their own Character in this Point, they can never be thought good Evidence in any Court of Justice against *Hereticks*. 'Tis impossible to determine from any Thing the Author of the *Reflections*, &c. has said, which Side he takes, or whether he understands his own *Affertion* in any Sense at all, or not; and Mr. *Nisbet* has taken great Care not to leave himself accountable for any Opinion of his own in this Case. His implicit Faith in the Church, concerning an Article which the Church has never defined or explain'd, may prove him perhaps a good *Churchman*, which he may be in one Sense, whether he makes any Use of his own Reason, or not.

Upon my saying, that whatever the Separation be between the Conformists and Non-Conformists, it is certainly mutual, and that they both equally and alike separate from one another; this Gentleman's Temper is much ruffled, and discovers a sort of Disorder, which seems to be hereditary to him, and leaves but little or

no Hopes of a Cure. For here Mr. Nisbet falls to talking of a great many broken incoherent Things concerning the Kirk of Scotland, King James, certain Books written in that Reign against the Church of Rome, and a Pamphlet coming out about that Time by a *disguised Papist*, and pretending there could be no Centre of Unity, but by submitting to the *Authority of the Pope, &c.* all which are as much to the Purpose, as if he had went off from the Matter in Hand to the *World in the Moon*. Does he deny that the Separation between the Conformists and Non-Conformists is mutual? Or has he offer'd any Thing in Proof of the contrary? Not at all. But the great Grievance is, my saying, that *the Church has sworn away all Authority to the Crown*: And is not this Matter of Fact? Is it not undeniably plain, and does not every Body know it? Yes, that's true; but I must not think to come off so; for my saying this, looks too like a *pre-meditated Stroke at the Supremacy, and a denying the Magistrate the Power which this Gentleman and his Friends allow him*.

But all this is mere Affectation and Grimace: Mr. Nisbet understands me better than he pretends; and I am sorry, for his sake, that he should have given me this Occasion of explaining myself farther to him. He knows very well, that I disclaim for my self and Friends all Authority and Jurisdiction but what is lodged in the Hands of the Civil Magistrate; and therefore we may take the Oaths to the King upon Principle, with good Consciences, and without Repentance. I did not blame the Church for taking the Oaths, and investing his Majesty with all *Authority, both Ecclesiastical and Civil*; but only those *Church-Men*, that do this against their Principles; who give with one Hand, and re-assume with the other; who are continually claiming and pursuing an Authority, which they have sworn away; who take the Oaths, and then banter them, pretend to wash them down with a Glass of Wine, and quote *Hudibras* to justify their Perjury.

'Tis well known, that there is a Party in the Church, who would be thought the only true *Church-Men*, that claim an Authority and Jurisdiction from Christ himself; and yet swear away that very Authority to the Crown, and lay themselves under a *Præmunire*, if they should dare to act upon their own Principles, in discharging that

that Trust, which they pretend to hold by divine Right, and independent on any human Authority whatsoever. For this I appeal to all the Books and Writings of the High-flying Authoritative Church-Men, which are fill'd with loud Complaints, and bitter Invectives upon this very Score. And that these Gentlemen are not satisfy'd with the Oaths, or easy under their present Circumstances, if there was need of any fresh Proof, I presume the late Conspiracy, now under the Consideration of the Parliament, will afford us sufficient Evidence. But, perhaps, Mr. Nisbet will say, that all this is nothing to him; he is very well satisfy'd with the Oaths, and has no Hand in the Plot. This may be true enough, I have said nothing against it; but then he must give me leave to reply upon him in his own Words, *That good Wits are apt to jump, and that Eggs are Eggs in all Ages and Countries; and where Men are acted by the same Principles, they will always be known by their Fruits.*

Mr. Nisbet, in the next Place, proceeds to support his Friend, and the two Universities, upon the Credit of this Axiom, that Nothing is in the UNDERSTANDING but what was first in the SENSE or SENSORY; *Nihil est in Intellectu, quod non prius fuit in Sensu.* Mr. Nisbet having just mention'd this Axiom, and made it a civil Compliment or two, presently marches off, and leaves it, with his Friend, in the lurch, as having a Business of greater Importance upon his Hands. And here he goes on for two whole Pages, in proving, that a blind Man cannot see, nor a deaf Man hear; and that a Man born blind and deaf cannot perform any of those Offices and Operations which necessarily depend upon these Senses. This is no News; the Gentleman is doubtless in the right, and it would be great Obstinacy and very unconscionable in me to deny this. But what does he infer from hence? Why, that abstracting from the Mediation and Instrumentality of the Organical Senses, the Soul, or Mind, must be perfectly quiescent, and remain, for the time, without any Power of thinking or acting at all.

But this Conclusion of his has the ill Luck to be attended with two small Inconveniences; for, in the first Place, it is not true; and, in the next Place, 'tis nothing at all to the Purpose, either with respect to the Sense, or the Use.



Use and Application of the Axiom in the *Aristotelian Philosophy*, or the Design of his Friend in producing it.

I grant, that where all Communication by the organical Senses should be cut off, the *Soul* in that case could not act upon the *Body*, nor be acted upon by it, or give any sensible Proof of its Union and real Presence. Yet still, while it is supposed really to exist, as a rational, intelligent, self-determining Agent, it must be allow'd a Power of reflecting upon its own real Existence, upon the Existence of a first independent Cause, and of forming all those Ideas which concern the natural or moral Relation of such a Cause to its Effects. To deny this, is to all Intents and Purposes a denying the real Existence of the *Soul*, as distinct from the *Body*; a subjecting all the Powers and Operations of the *Mind* to the Laws of *Mechanism*; and a supposing Thoughts and Ideas to be nothing else, but the different Modifications, or at least the necessary Physical Effects of Matter and Motion. But whatever an *Aristotelian* or a *Materialist* might say, one would think a Christian Philosopher and Divine should not maintain this without reflecting upon its Consequences.

As this Principle therefore is false, and must terminate in *Materialism*; so I shall now shew that 'tis nothing to the purpose, supposing it true, and that Mr. Nisbet has not at all serv'd the Cause of his Friend by it.

The *Aristotelian* Doctrine concerning the sensible and intelligible Species of Things is well known to the Learned; and I believe no body, who has considered the Matter, can doubt but the present Axiom was laid down by them as the Ground and first Principle of this Part of their Philosophy. Now these Philosophers teach us, that external Objects, by certain determinate Impressions upon the material organical System, produce the sensible Species, i. e. the Sensations of things; of which Sensation, thus produced, they suppose the material Organ it self to be the proper Subject. All this being granted without Proof, they next proceed to tell us, that these sensible Species, or Sensations, being convey'd by their proper and respective Organs into the *Sensus communis*, and being there receiv'd as a common Bason, or *Receptaculum Chyli*, they are from thence conducted in one continued Channel, and emptied into the

( 17 )  
the Understanding, where making their Impressions like a Seal upon Wax, they become *Intelligible*, and by an incomprehensible Chymistry are converted into Rational Notions and Perceptions.

If Mr. *Nisbet* does not think this to be a fair Account of the *Aristotelian* Doctrine in this Case, he is at Liberty to make better Sense of it if he can; but I think this is plainly what they aim at, so far as 'tis capable of being explain'd at all. However it be, I must do the Author of the *Reflections* the Justice, as to own, that he seems to me not much to have mistaken the Sense of the *Aristotelian* Philosophers in this Axiom; and could he have made good the Axiom it self, he must have carried his Point so far, as to have prov'd two distinct Subjects of Sensations, Ideas, and Perceptions in Man, namely, the material Organical *System*, and the Rational *Soul*; tho' he might perhaps have miscarried in what he said afterwards about the Super-rational Spirit. But Mr. *Nisbet*, in giving the Axiom another Meaning, and turning it off to a quite different Question, has very much dis-served his *Friend*, as well as the *Truth*; and would here represent him as advancing a *Principle*, in order to prove *Something*, which if granted him, could have been *Nothing* at all to his *Purpose*.

But in Opposition to this Part of the Peripatetick Philosophy, besides what I have already said in overthrowing the Author's Principles, it might be easily demonstrated from the Nature and Reason of the thing, that Matter cannot possibly think; and that there is but one only Subject of Sensation, Thought and Intelligence in Man, which is the *Soul* or *Mind* it self. For which, to avoid Prolixity here, I refer the curious or learned Reader to what Dr. *Clark* has written against Mr. *Dodwel* upon this Head, and to what Mr. *Ditton* has farther demonstrated in the Appendix to his Book of the Resurrection; which Authors I refer to, not to determine any thing by their Authority, but only to let the Reader know where he may find the Demonstration, as I would refer to *Euclid* in a like Case. But for the sake of those who may not be so capable of such abstract Reasonings, I must here observe farther, that the same thing is undeniably confirm'd by Experience likewise, in every one who has had the Misfortune to

lose a Leg, or an Arm, who plainly feel and perceive the same Sensations in the same Part after, as they did before the Amputation; and did they not reason about it, and were not convinc'd by other Experience of their Loss, could not know by any different Sensation, or the want of any feeling in the Part it self, that they had indeed lost it. Which is an evident Proof that these *sensible Species* or *Sensations* are not subjected in the material System, or corporeal Substance itself, but in a quite different Subject, that is, in the *Soul*.

Mr. Nisbet seems to have been under great Pain and Difficulty to determine, in what gentle manner he should touch upon the *Super-rational Spirit*. He has neither advanc'd any thing new in Favour of his Friend, nor reply'd to any thing that I had urged against him on this Occasion; but he tells me, that he takes the Question to be properly this, Whether barely a Whim of the Author's, or otherwise of long standing, and only put into a modern Dress? And he thinks that the vigorous Assaults I have made against it, are manifestly owing to a settled Prejudice and Spite against *Antiquity*.

But I can assure him that he is much mistaken, and that I have no Prejudice at all against *Antiquity*. I can readily allow the Ancients their proper Place and Office, as the most credible capable *Witnesses* of what was said and done in their Time; but not as Judges of *Truth* or Deciders of *Controversy*. I can submit to their *Testimony* in Matters of *Faith*, where they are clear and consistent with themselves; but not to their Umpirage and Arbitration in Matters of *Reason* and *Revelation*. The Ancients might as well be mistaken, were as much divided among themselves, and maintain'd as many idle, absurd and ridiculous things, as any of their Successors have since done; and therefore I pay no more Regard to their Judgment, than to any modern Judgment equally fallible. And indeed this slavish Subjection of the Mind to the Opinions of others, this Canonical Method of *Voting* for *Truth*, and proving it by *Suffrage*, is fit for none but *Common-Place* Men, and such *Retailers* of Knowledge as deal only upon *Trust*, and never concern themselves to examine Matters so far as to make any *Opinion* properly their own. This, I know, has sometimes pass'd for *Learning*, and been taken as the Mark and Characteristick of a  
Scholar;



*Scholar* ; but yet 'tis only such a *sort* of Learning, as an *Idiot* might attain by the bare Force of Memory, without *Reason* or *Judgment*. But to proceed: The Question about the *Super-rational Spirit*, as Mr. Nisbet would now have it put, is perfectly ridiculous ; Whether it was a *Whim* of the Author's own, or whether some other People had not had the same *Whim* in their Heads before him ? For the Author did not barely quote it as the *Opinion* of others, but he espoused it as his own. He laboured to establish it upon the Principles of *Reason* and *Scripture*, as a Thing of such Consequence, that the Christian Faith could not subsist without it, and as absolutely necessary to the obtaining our *supreme Felicity*, and the keeping up an Intercourse and Correspondence with the *spiritual invisible World*. I think therefore, that he has nothing to complain of, and that I acted right in taking him upon his own Principles, and shewing that there was no such rational or scriptural Evidence for it as he pretended, and that both *these Principles* were plainly against him.

There is one very unfair and unchristian Insinuation, that Mr. Nisbet has made up and down in his Book, as if I had intended artfully to favour the Cause of Deism, and to wound Christianity it self through the Author's Sides. I therefore declare, that I expect to appear before the *Judgment Seat of Christ*, and to be accountable for what I have said and done, as much as Mr. Nisbet, or the Author of the *Reflections*, &c. I firmly believed, and think I have proved, that the Author's Principles are absurd, unintelligible, and self-contradictory ; that they must give the *Deists* all the Advantage in the World against Christianity ; and that the Christian Doctrines cannot possibly subsist upon them.

Whether I have sufficiently proved this or no, must be submitted to the Judgment of the Publick upon the Merits of what has been said, unless the Author, or some Body for him, should demand farther Satisfaction ; and in that Case, I promise either to defend my *self*, or to give up the *Cause*.

And now it must be left to every Man's Judgment, whether this Gentleman has not quite given up his Friend under the most considerable Difficulties, and made the Matter rather worse than better,

The Author's self contradictory  
of the Christian Doctrines, that they are intelligible  
and univ[er]sally comprehensible and incomprehen-  
sible, very plain and easy, and yet very dark and in-  
tricate, and all this in Things necessary to Salvation, is  
*silently drop'd*: His Charge against all Dissenters, with-  
out Exception, as Schismatics; that their Sin is as  
great and inexcusable as *Treason or Horse-stealing*, and as  
evident as that a Triangle has *Three Sides* as well as  
*three Corners*, is now *bury'd up*. His unrighteous Charge  
against a Right Reverend Prelate of the Church, and  
his Lordship's Friends and Admirers, is *silently laid to*  
*Sleep*: His great Principle, that the *Rational Assent* of the  
Mind may be carry'd beyond the *Perception* of the *Un-*  
*derstanding*, is left in the Grave with the Author: And  
what is still worse, if worse can be, he is suffer'd to sink  
under the Weight of the *Super-rational Spirit*, and not a  
Word to be said by any *Rational Soul* to support him.  
To conclude: I doubt not but Mr. Nisbet can talk more  
to the Purpose upon other Occasions, than he has  
done, or could do in this Letter; he had undertaken  
an hard Task; he was resolv'd to say something for  
the sake of a *Friend*, in Defence of a Book which he  
knew could not be defended.

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**F I N I S.**

and now I had be left to every Man's Judge-  
ment, whether this Comment has not quite given  
up a Friend under the most considerable Dis-  
cuss, and made the matter rather worse than  
better.